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# Executive Summary



West Hickman Creek

## **THE NEED FOR A GREENWAY MASTER PLAN**

Located in the heart of the Bluegrass region, Lexington-Fayette County is a vital, growing community with a unique physical and cultural identity. Throughout the years, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) has explored and put into practice many methods and procedures for coping with growth, while maintaining a good sense of the Bluegrass character. As the Community continues to grow, it is imperative to protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources essential to the quality of life expected by its citizens. Greenways are linear corridors that can provide critical linkage and protection of natural and cultural resources. Issues, such as flooding, transportation, water quality, habitat loss, historic preservation, economic stimulation, recreation and fitness can be addressed and resolved by a multi-objective greenway system. The [Greenway Master Plan](#) communicates the importance and need for greenways, and recommends a county-wide system of interconnected greenways that, as green

infrastructure, will become an integral component in the Community's fabric.

## **A SUMMARY OF GREENWAY EFFORTS**

Environmental protection, floodplain management, establishment of greenways, provision of recreational opportunities and improving access to community resources close to where residents live and work are long-term goals of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG). Then Vice Mayor Pam Miller's 1984 proposal for a Ribbon Park, presented by the Division of Planning, envisioned a system of protected floodplains and habitats that connected neighborhoods and parks with pedestrian walkways. That proposal called for the continuous protection of the West Hickman stream floodway, extending from Meadowbrook Park to the southern Lexington-Fayette County line. That area is now part of Veterans Park, and includes other floodplains that were designated by the LFUCG as future greenway corridors. The proposal illustrated the Urban County Government's innovative vision to connect the County's park, trail, and open space

resources while protecting floodplains. This idea evolved into the Greenway Concept, which was included in the 1988 Comprehensive Plan, and guided Community development over the next several years.

Since the introduction of the Greenway Concept in the 1988 Comprehensive Plan, greenways have become an important consideration in land use and development planning. In 1991, the Greenspace Commission was established and approved by ordinance as part of the Department of Housing. Assistance was supplied by the Division of Planning, the Division of Parks and Recreation, the Historic Preservation Office, the Council Office and the Department of Law. With input from the Greenspace Commission, the early 1992 Greenway Plan produced by the Division of Planning focused on greenspace acquisition and maintenance and called for a written and unified greenspace policy. The 1991 Plan was never adopted.

The Division of Planning and the Greenspace Commission teamed up again in 1994 to develop the Greenspace Plan. It emphasized the use of linkages, such as streams, roads and railroads, to connect greenspace throughout the urban and rural areas.

In 1998, an ad hoc group representing involved Urban County Government divisions was brought together to form the Greenway Coordinating Committee. The goal of this Committee is a unified policy for greenway planning, development and maintenance. This Greenway Master Plan is the result of their efforts and the initial vision of the 1984 Ribbon Park, as stated in the 1996 Comprehensive Plan:

*"The benefits of creating a comprehensive greenspace system go far beyond leisure and aesthetics. The benefits are fundamental to the future economy and quality of the environment of the community and the entire Bluegrass Region. Protecting the remaining Greenspace is not a luxury, it is a necessity for maintaining the quality of life that Bluegrass residents*

*have always enjoyed and will continue to desire for the future."*

Related efforts include the 1998 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the 2001 Comprehensive Plan Update, the Year 2025 Bicycle-Pedestrian Transportation Plan, as well as urban forestry and stormwater management activities and regulations. In concert with the greenway planning effort, these related planning regulations represent significant strides toward floodplain protection, open space preservation, development of a comprehensive shared use transportation system and improvement of passive recreational opportunities. A more detailed discussion of previous greenway-related planning efforts is found in Appendix B.



The LFUCG has completed several greenway projects, including Veterans Park, Squires Road Trail, Coldstream Park, Beaumont Trail and the Viley/Skycrest Neighborhood Stormwater projects. These and other funded projects demonstrate the Urban County Government's commitment to the development of a community greenway system.

### **THE GREENWAY PLANNING PROCESS**

In July 2000, the LFUCG employed a consulting team led by FMSM of Lexington, Kentucky and included Greenways Incorporated of Durham, North Carolina and McIlwain & Associates of Lexington, Kentucky. The consultants worked with the Greenspace Commission, Greenway Coordinating Committee and interested citizens to prepare a Greenway Master Plan. An extensive data collection and inventory of existing physical features and socioeconomic factors was conducted in order to define opportunities and constraints for a county-wide greenway system. The consultant team also conducted, in partnership with LFUCG, a series of public workshops held on October 10, 2000, December 11, 2000 and January 29, 2001 to solicit detailed input from the residents of the Urban

County. Approximately 270 residents participated in these workshops.

Through these workshops, residents identified a variety of land and water corridors for consideration as potential greenways. The "wish list" compiled from these meetings was examined and scrutinized by the consultant team and LFUCG staff. An optimal system of land and water-based greenway corridors was defined and shared with the public for review and comment. Of particular interest to the residents were the concepts of linkage, preservation of natural, historic and cultural resources, and enhancement of economic values. The result of this discussion was a comprehensive network of both environmental and recreational greenway facilities.

In addition to the public workshops, LFUCG staff also met with key stakeholder groups to present findings and recommendations on the Master Plan and solicit input on the planning process. A listing of these stakeholders may be found in Appendix C. An informational presentation was also made to the LFUCG Council.

The Greenway Master Plan is intended to work concomitantly with the goals, policies and provisions of other adopted LFUCG land use and management plans. This Plan is to be adopted by the Urban County Planning Commission as an element of the 2001 Comprehensive Plan Update.

### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the greenway master planning process emerged goals and objectives for a county-wide system. The proposed multi-objective Greenway System is comprised of nine conservation greenway corridors, twenty primary greenway trail corridors, a system of secondary and tertiary trails, a system of rural on-road bicycle routes, and three water-based trails. Much of the Plan responds to specific comments that were submitted by residents during the series of public workshops.

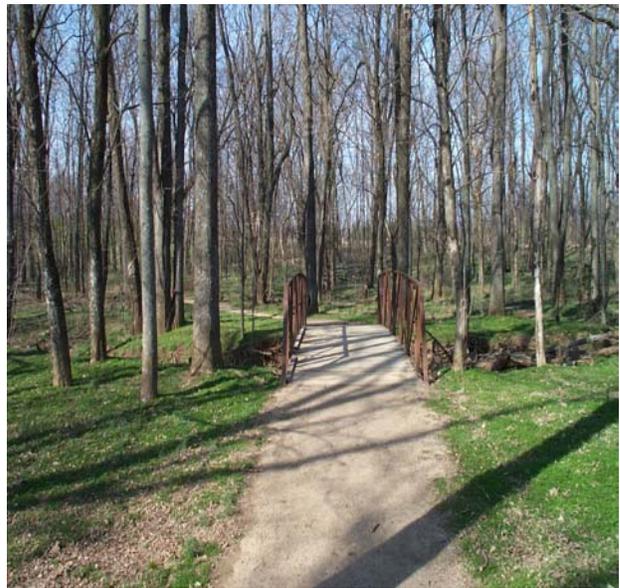
The Greenway Master Plan is a framework to provide direction for subsequent implementation strategies. Adoption of the Greenway Master Plan instigates the preparation of regulations that establishes and outlines a Greenway Program.

### **Conservation Corridors**

With the introduction of floodplain management regulations in 2000, LFUCG has essentially prohibited development within the 100-year

floodplains of any stream. This and other restrictions will prevent increased repetitive flood losses associated with new development. However, the effects of previous development are evident throughout Lexington-Fayette County. Repetitive flood losses, channelization, loss of riparian corridors, fragmentation of habitat, and water quality impairment exist throughout the Urban Service Area. Although flood losses within the Rural Service Area are of lesser concern, the effects of agricultural runoff and fragmented riparian habitat are evidenced by water quality impairment. In order to address these concerns, the proactive management of the nine major stream corridors is proposed. A crucial component of this effort is the preservation or reestablishment of open space and riparian buffers along each identified stream or river.

The primary focus of the Conservation Greenway Corridors is the preservation of floodplains in rapidly developing areas and restoration of floodplains in older developed sections of the Community. These corridors aid stormwater management by providing needed temporary storage. In addition, the corridors improve water quality, provide wildlife habitat, and provide access to the Community's stream resources.



McConnell Trace

### **Greenway Trail System**

Greenway trails might be located in conservation corridors or manmade corridors, such as rail-trails, utility corridors, or along urban and rural roadways. The Greenway Trail System radiates from the Downtown hub, linking to major destinations and to counties beyond. These corridors provide a basic

framework for alternative transportation, recreational, health, economic and educational opportunities.

As the twenty Primary Greenway Trails provide the main framework of connections throughout the County, the Secondary Greenway Trails provide linkage between primary trails. Secondary trails offer access to and from neighborhoods, and to regional and local destination points not directly accessed by the primary system. Tertiary Greenway Trails form connections at a neighborhood level.

As part of the Greenway Trails System, the Rural Road Bike Routes will provide opportunities for recreation, tourism and alternative transportation. The Rural Road Bike Routes are proposed to link the Urban Service Area to specific destinations within the County, and to potential destinations in surrounding counties.

Trails will utilize both on-road and off-road facilities, and will be designed for shared use as much as possible. It is recommended that, where feasible, equestrian trails be considered. Also included in the Trail System are three water-based trails for boating opportunities on navigable streams.

### **A PLAN OF ACTION**

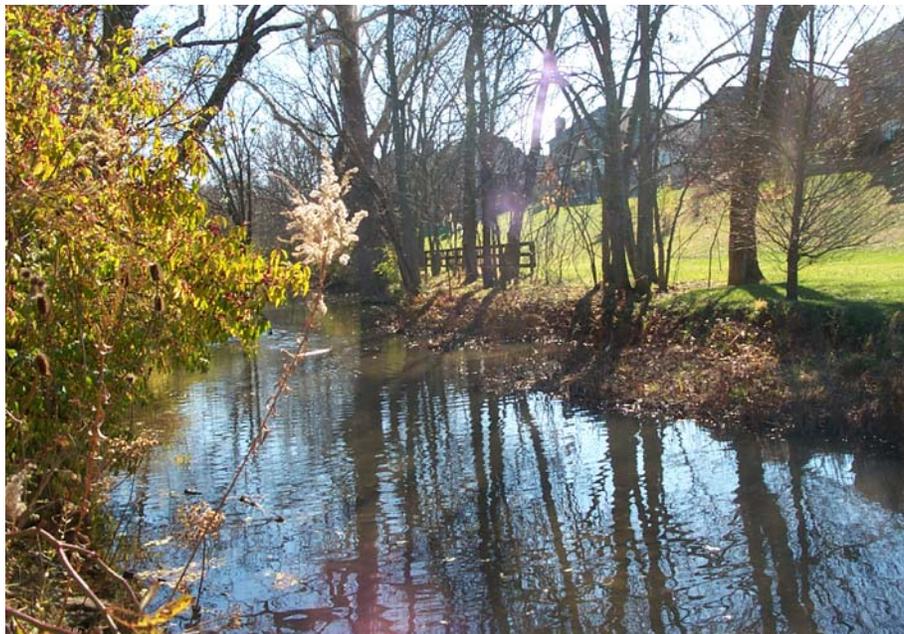
It is recommended that LFUCG creates a Greenway Program and a Greenway Coordinator position to ensure successful implementation of the Greenway Master Plan. The visionary Plan will require short-term and long-term efforts by both the public and

private sector. Funding for acquisition, planning, construction and maintenance of greenway facilities will come from a variety of federal, state and local sources. Regulations, such as an ordinance and/or manual, should be written to define the roles of key participants; procedures for acquisition and funding; and standards for design, construction, maintenance and operations of greenways.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT**

This document is intended to serve as a working "greenprint" for action. LFUCG staff, consultants and Urban County residents are encouraged to use this report as a resource for implementing the proposed county-wide greenway system. The first chapter of this report identifies the benefits most frequently associated with greenways. Chapter Two is an inventory of existing conditions that provide the foundation for a community greenway system. In Chapter Three, the vision, goals and objectives for the greenway system are defined. Chapter Four provides an in-depth description of the entire greenway system, and features individual greenway corridors that comprise the county-wide system. Chapter Five outlines a plan for implementing the greenway system.

As part of the Plan, there is a set of appendices that provides additional supporting information for the comprehensive greenway system. Appendices include definitions, supporting documentation, public input, cost estimates, funding sources, design guidelines, and types of management.



South Elkhorn Creek